RE-ENVISIONING THE NATURAL WORLD IN EUGÈNE DELACROIX'S *LION DEVOURING A HORSE*

by

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ABSTRACT

Eugène Delacroix's 1844 lithograph *Lion Devouring a Horse* features a dead horse that has fallen prey to an eager lion in a shallow and ill-defined setting. While Delacroix pursued lion and horse imagery throughout his career, producing numerous small paintings, sketches, and drawings of the subject, *Lion Devouring a Horse* stands apart. In *Lion Devouring a Horse*, Delacroix creates a disquieting intimacy for the viewer, drawing her into direct confrontation with a vicious act of consumption from which no visual, narrative, or psychological outlet is offered. This thesis explores Delacroix's artistic influences, his engagement with contemporary anatomical developments, and the particularities of the lithographic medium, in order to unpack the historical and cultural significance of *Lion Devouring a Horse*.

The first section of this thesis examines recent precedents in lion and horse imagery set by English animalier George Stubbs and French Romanticist Théodore Géricault, recognizing their influence on Delacroix's lithograph, but also acknowledging his reexamination and reinterpretation. The second section evaluates Delacroix's interest in—and studies of—human, animal, and more specifically, feline anatomy, and also his exposure to recent discoveries in comparative anatomy. The final section addresses medium and meaning, unpacking the Parisian experience of lithography and the newfound artistic freedom that it enabled Delacroix to achieve.

Taken together, these three facets of cultural, social, and artistic influence suggest

that Delacroix's image—created as it was in a new and experimental medium at a moment in which the presumed superiority of humankind over the natural world was increasingly being called into question—offers an intriguing visual antidote to the heroic assumptions of history painting and its traditional celebration of human achievement.

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INTRODUCTION

In Eugène Delacroix's 1844 lithograph *Lion Devouring a Horse* (Lithograph, 16.8 x 23.4 cm. Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City), a horse lies prey to a lion in a shallow space. Although Delacroix was preoccupied with lion and horse imagery—and broadly feline imagery—throughout the entirety of his career, he did not undertake a full-scale history painting of the subject until 1854, when the French government commissioned him to paint a subject of his choosing for the Universal Exposition of 1855 and he began work on *The Lion Hunt* (Oil on canvas, 168.9 x 359 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux).[1] While *The Lion Hunt* describes a savage battle between several Moroccan hunters and a pair of lions in an expansive landscape, the small lithograph *Lion Devouring a Horse* concentrates on the aftermath of such a struggle, viewed at close range in a nondescript natural setting. In *Lion Devouring a Horse*, Delacroix creates a disquieting intimacy for the viewer, drawing her into direct confrontation with a vicious act of consumption from which no visual, narrative, or psychological outlet is offered. Created in a new and experimental medium, at a moment in which the presumed superiority of humankind over the natural world was increasingly being called into

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[1] Lee Johnson, ed., *1832-1863 (Movable Pictures and Private Decorations)*, vol. III, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1986), 24. According to Lee Johnson, Delacroix's *Lion Hunt* painting of 1855 that was commissioned by the French government was severely damaged by a fire at the Town Hall of Bordeaux on December 7th, 1870.

question, *Lion Devouring a Horse* offers an intriguing visual antidote to the heroic assumptions of history painting and its traditional celebration of human achievement.

Lion Devouring a Horse features a dead horse, its body sprawled horizontally across the composition with its torso abruptly cut short at the frame. At the center of the image lies the horse's head and the wide-eyed gaze of the lion, gripping into the flesh of his prey. The diagonal stretch of the horse's leg and head is juxtaposed with the lion's body, which is cast at a downward angle, forming a triangular composition that predominates the image. The immediate foreground contains a sketchy indication of grass, while the area encircling the animals is left nearly untouched by the lithographic crayon, spotlighting the physical entanglement of predator and prey. At this point lies a dark pool of what is presumably blood near the horse's mouth, which underscores the violent trauma enacted on the horse. Delacroix renders the encompassing landscape with minimal detail, thwarting any opportunity to pinpoint the location of the encounter. A majority of the background is blackened by a large mass (possibly a cave or natural hillside), providing contrast to the remainder of the composition. Beyond the blackened hillside, a grassy clearing is indicated through Delacroix's light crayon-work. His cursory rendering of the environment does little more than frame the subjects, leaving viewers with few answers as to why and where this interaction has occurred.

To begin to understand the significance of Delacroix's intimate and fragmented approach to the scene of a *Lion Devouring a Horse* in his 1844 lithograph, we can first contrast it to his approach in the *Lion Hunt* series of 1855. The first *Lion Hunt* of 1855 was partially destroyed in a fire, so for the purpose of this argument, I will discuss the smaller version also titled *Lion Hunt* dated 1855 (Oil on canvas, 56.5 x 73.5 cm.

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm).[2] In *The Paintings of Eugene Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue* (1986), art historian Lee Johnson points out that while this painting is not an exact replica of the original *Lion Hunt*, there are only minor differences, and the composition was most likely begun in preparation for the Universal Exposition, even though it was not completed until after the large-scale *Lion Hunt*.[3]

The *Lion Hunt* diverges significantly from *Lion Devouring a Horse*, as the composition is more fully developed, and Delacroix shifts attention to the powerful struggle between man and beast. The *Lion Hunt* captures an eruption of energy as Delacroix illustrates the dramatic conflict between the hunters and the hunted. The complexity of the composition equals the complexity of the action, demonstrated by the contorted bodies of horses and soldiers struggling for survival. The subjects in the foreground and middle-ground are arranged in a curvilinear form, which cuts horizontally through the composition, further accentuating the combativeness of the two forces. The middle-ground is demarcated by a lion and lioness thrashing wildly at their enemies, fending for their lives. In the background, a luscious landscape extends into the distance, while from the left corner, additional forces rush to aid their fellow soldiers. The composition is punched by hues of red and gold clothing that adorn the Moroccan's bodies and contrast with the browns, blues, and greens that decorate the animals and landscape. Delacroix condenses the boldest colors at the forefront to further accentuate the ruthless encounter.

Delacroix often conveyed his admiration of Peter Paul Rubens in his journal; for

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[2] Ibid., 24.
[3] Ibid., 28.

instance, an entry from August 10th, 1850 reads: "Went to the museum…Admired the *Souls in Purgatory*, it is in the finest manner of Rubens. I could not tear myself away from the picture of the *Trinity*, from the *Saint Francis*, from the *Holy Family*, etc."[4] Rubens's style had an immense influence on Delacroix's own development. Therefore, it was natural for the French Romanticist to seek out Rubens's lion hunt paintings for inspiration, and to examine the most recent precedent set for a large-scale lion hunt painting. Delacroix familiarized himself only with the engravings, as he did not have immediate access to the paintings. As indebted as he was, Delacroix did not hesitate to offer a critique of the Flemish master, when studying Pieter Claesz Soutman's engraving of *The Hunt of the Lion and Lioness* after Rubens, (late 16th — mid-17th century) (Engraving.Victoria and Albert Museum, London). He acknowledged overall compositional problems, stating,

> …the picture has an aspect of confusion, the eye does not know where to stop, it gets the feeling of a frightful disorder; and it seems that art has not presided sufficiently to augment, by prudent distribution of sacrifices, the effect of so many inventions of genius.[5]

In Rubens's *The Hunt of the Lion and Lioness*, primacy is given to the battle between man and beast. Featuring a low horizon line, blank sky, and figures pushed to the forefront in a shallow space, Rubens amplifies attention given to the struggle. He includes a multitude of figures, hunters, their horses, and wild beasts entangled in a circular fashion. Although the variety of figures adds dynamism to the scene, Delacroix was fair to critique the illegibility of the composition. The overlapping of bodies are

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[4] Eugene Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugene Delacroix*, trans. Walter Pach (New York, NY: Covici, Friede, 1937), 240.

[5] Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugene*, 133.

difficult to discern from one another, man or beast. Despite Rubens's acknowledged skill in rendering human anatomy, it is plain that the Flemish master struggles to describe the complexity of action that unfolds in a hunting endeavor.

In Delacroix's *Lion Hunt*, he resolves the various problems that arise in Rubens's *The Hunt of the Lion and Lioness*. Unlike Rubens, Delacroix gives greater attention to the landscape, by employing a high horizon line. In the Soutman engraving, there are men that battle exclusively with shields and swords, and without a landscape, it is unclear where they are located. Delacroix resolves this confusion by referring specifically to a Moroccan setting and attire, inspired by his trip with the diplomat Count de Mornay in 1831.[6] In the far right of *Lion Hunt*, there also lies a fatally wounded man clutching a firearm, closing the large temporal gap that Rubens's work suggests. This advanced technology provides a surefire method for the Moroccans to gain an upper hand and quickly conquer their foes, yet it lies out of reach. The remaining hunters fend off the large felines with swords and spears, as more hunters swoop in, indicated in the back left corner of the canvas. It is possible that Delacroix inserted the firearm as a temporal device, as it is the only firearm visible in the painting. Yet, by keeping the firearm at an arm's length, it levels the playing field between these oppositional forces.

In Delacroix's *Lion Hunt*, greater precedence is given to the interaction between the hunters and felines. His knowledge of lion anatomy offers him an advantage as he showcases his advanced understandings in his renderings. Alongside Rubens, one immediately recognizes the awkwardness of the leaping lioness from behind, while Delacroix's lioness is more naturalistic and attacks the rear of the horse, typical of their

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[6] Ibid., 100.

behavior. Due to the openness of Delacroix's composition, the large felines visually take precedence. Despite the fallen human victims, one cannot help but sympathize with the felines. This sympathetic response is not only accentuated by the lion's defensive posture as he rears its head back towards the enemy, but also by the vertical weapons pointing directly at the heads of the beasts. As viewers, Delacroix reminds us that this is a not a random happening between man and animal, but rather a fearsome predator cornered and ultimately reduced to prey. In the face of such human dominance, even a powerful lion must succumb.

Delacroix's manipulation of the composition, specifically the rearrangement of the figures and felines, enables his *Lion Hunt* to exhibit greater continuity and fluidity between the figures along the ellipse. He maintains the autonomy and weightiness of figures and animals alike, while retaining the energetic struggle of a lion hunt. By incorporating fewer figures and spreading them along the foreground, Delacroix prioritizes the overall legibility and tension of the ongoing battle. Rubens instead sacrifices coherence in favor of an unimaginable chaos, by jam-packing too many tangled bodies within the picture plane.

Delacroix's lithograph *Lion Devouring a Horse* creates an altogether different viewing experience, and suggests entirely different meanings from the heroic assumptions of the *Lion Hunt*. For instance, in *Lion Devouring a Horse*, the lion is alert, yet his body remains fixed, which accentuates the placidity of the encounter. Just beyond the still bodies, the viewer is abruptly met with the nearly-black mass that shrouds the animals. All this image has to proclaim is found within the immediate foreground—there is no room to seek either answers or relief. *The Lion Hunt* provides a fulfilling

experience, by presenting a narrative—the battle between two forces is ongoing, but the resolution is not difficult to deduce. In the middle ground, trees plopped along the hillside lead to the impending outcome as more Moroccan hunters rush to aid their comrades. Despite the grandeur and complication of such a clash, this work still extends a sense of closure. In comparison, *Lion Devouring a Horse* only features the linked bodies of lion and horse. They lead nowhere new, only back to each other—a back and forth movement that is taunting.

Upon further examination of the each work, the distinct viewing experiences become more pronounced. For instance, the *Lion Hunt* situates the onlooker on the edge of the ellipse, marveling at the chaotic energy unfolding before them. In *Lion Devouring a Horse*, by contrast, the viewer is situated much closer to the encounter, uncomfortably implicated in the violent action unfolding as the lion looks directly toward the space that the viewer would occupy. More reassuringly, in the *Lion Hunt*, the figures' gazes fail to meet that of the viewer's, and the absence of that engagement indicates that the scene occurs in its own time and place. The *Lion Hunt* asks the viewer to pick apart the tightly woven figures, animals, and weapons, but there is never any doubt that man is triumphing over animal. While in *Lion Hunt*, one can practically hear the clank of the swords, the roaring lions, the shrieks of pain, *Lion Devouring a Horse* remains quiet and subdued, as the combat has long passed. Yet the tension of the lithograph is amplified by the engagement with the lion's gaze and the tonality of the work, which features white highlights and dark shadows. *Lion Devouring the Horse* displays subjects much larger in scale, amplifying the sense of confrontation in the viewing experience. The composition

is sparse and therefore legible, but remains ambiguous in its meaning. The only narrative clue, the blanket shrouding the horse, encourages more questions than answers.

PRECEDENTS

The depiction of animal violence in general—and lion and horse imagery in particular—form part of a long-standing artistic tradition harking back to antiquity. The subject rose to new prominence in the eighteenth century, however, with the widespread popularity of English artist-scientist George Stubbs. Stubbs's work served as a significant model for the subsequent development of lion and horse imagery in the romantic era, and Delacroix's *Lion Devouring a Horse* is clearly indebted to the precedent set by Stubbs.

Initially, Stubbs was interested in human anatomy, but only convicted murderers were eligible for human dissections, which were few and far between.[7] Instead, Stubbs often participated in animal dissections, and between the years 1756-1759, Stubbs lived in a farmhouse where he dedicated himself to the anatomical studies of horses. In 1766, he published *The Anatomy of a Horse*, which became an indispensable tool for veterinarians and artists alike.[8] These accomplishments made him a valuable asset to any artists interested in pursuing horse imagery. In 1763, Stubbs exhibited an especially popular series of lion and horse paintings that were subsequently engraved and published by Benjamin Green in 1769, and later by his son, George Stubbs, in 1788.[9] Parisian artists gained direct access to Stubbs's prints as early as 1776, when publishers began

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[7] Christopher Lennox-Boyd, Rob Dixon, and Tim Clayton, eds., *George Stubbs: The Complete Engraved Works* (London, UK: Sotheby's Publications, 2004), 2.

[8] Ibid., 295.

[9] Ibid., 26.

selling the works through an international distribution network that included a shop in Paris.[10]

An examination of Stubbs's *Horse Devoured by a Lion* of 1763 (Oil on canvas, 69.2 x 103.5 cm. Tate Gallery, London) establishes several key features of the series. The painting depicts a battle between predator and prey set in the limestone gorges of Creswell Crags in England. A hungry lion viciously grips the flesh of a terrified horse in an uninhabited landscape, overgrown with vegetation. Art historian Aris Sarafianos suggests this location "invokes a type of primitive environment predating the arrival of human beings."[11] Stubbs thus placed contemporary viewers at a significant historical remove from the scene being depicted.

The historical distancing implied by the setting of *Horse Devoured by a Lion* is further amplified by Stubbs's compositional choices. The pyramidal grouping of the lion and horse are located in the middle ground of the composition, separated from onlookers by the craggy foreground. Stubbs echoes the pyramidal grouping of the lion and horse in the landscape, further framing the ferocious encounter.

As Sarafianos argues, Stubbs's lion and horse series cannot be comfortably categorized as Neoclassicism or Romanticism, but is, rather, an amalgamation of

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[10] Ibid., 27.

[11] Aris Sarafianos, "Stubbs, Walpole and Burke: Convulsive Imitation and 'Truth Extorted,'" ed. Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding, Tate, last modified January 2013, accessed December 19, 2014, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/aris-sarafianos-stubbs-walpole-and-burke-convulsive-imitation-and-truth-extorted-r1138672. In this article, art historian Aris Sarafianos examines the uniqueness of Stubbs's *Lion and Horse* series, and draws several parallels between the series and the Burkean sublime. The author also comments on poet Horace Walpole's and other contemporaries responses to the Stubb's groundbreaking series.

Stubbs's empirical studies of animals in conjunction with elements of the Burkean sublime.[12] According to Edmund Burke's treatise, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* (1757) the sublime is incited by ideas of pain and danger, but distance is necessary for the viewer to experience a sublime reaction. As Burke writes, "When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are, delightful…"[13] Stubbs's inclusion of historical and spatial distance within the composition of *Horse Devoured by a Lion* may thus be seen to aestheticize the subject in line with contemporary theories of the sublime. The viewer can safely visualize the implications of the visceral encounter between two wild beasts, without feelings of imminent distress or danger.

In Burke's treatise, he specifically mentions the horse's duality as a domesticated creature and inciter of the sublime, writing,

> The horse in the light of an useful beast, fit for the plough, the road, the draft, in every social useful light the horse has nothing of the sublime; but is it thus that we are affected with him, *whose neck is cloathed with thunder, the glory of whose nostrils is terrible, who swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage, neither believeth that it is the sound of the trumpet.*[14]

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[12] Sarafianos, 'Stubbs, Walpole and Burke: Convulsive Imitation and 'Truth Extorted.'''

[13] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful and Other Pre-Revolutionary Writings*, ed. David Womersly (London, UK: Penguin Group, 1998), 86. The sublime, as Burke defines it, is: "…the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (p.86). The sublime arises from elements that denote pain, terror, or something that could threaten one's self-preservation. But this sublime feeling of both astonishment and terror can only take affect when the subject is not truthfully in harm's way, but when considering or witnessing such a happening from a safe distance.

[14] Ibid., 108-109.

According to Sarafianos, Burke's description of the horse blurs the horse's role as a docile, domesticated agent for manual labor with unpredictable beast.[15] The horse's duality that transitions from domesticated to sublime is demarcated by the italicized text, where Burke quotes the Book of Job. In this passage, Burke also mentions several wild cats—including the lion—as a powerful inducer of the sublime.[16] Burke's text suggests another parallel to Stubbs's decision to depict a horse and lion in combat. Stubbs may have chosen these beasts to heighten the sublimity of the encounter.

That Stubbs's horse and lion series was singularly concerned with evoking an experience of the sublime can be discerned from a consideration of another image from the series, *Horse Frightened by a Lion* (Oil on canvas, 70.5 x 101.9 cm. Tate Gallery, London). As with *Horse Devoured by a Lion*, the painting features an uninhabited landscape and jagged rock-shelter. In this painting, the lion has not yet attacked but is instead creeping out of the shadows and advancing on a startled horse. Although placed at a greater distance than the configuration in *Horse Devoured by a Lion*, the two animals' bodies still form a pyramidal shape, with the horse's head as the apex. Stubbs's retains the same intensity for this encounter, making the tension legible on the horse's body. Here—as with *Horse Devoured by a Lion*—the mane and tail almost appear animated, curling forward while horse's body jolts backwards. Clearly defined musculature makes tension visible across the horse's body, its eyes wide open and mouth agape. Stubbs grabs hold of the sheer terror and pain of the moment and amplifies it through the horse's bodily reaction.

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[15] Sarafianos, 'Stubbs, Walpole and Burke: Convulsive Imitation and 'Truth Extorted.'''
[16] Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into*, 109.

The Burkean sublime is a significant aspect of Stubbs's lion and horse series—this experience is realized through the back and forth interaction of the untamed beasts. But for the English animalier, the horse is the subject of the sequential works, and the sublime element emanates through the horse's volatile response. The lion is only a means to an end, a tool Stubbs's employs to cause extreme fear or inflict severe pain upon the horse. Furthermore, the titles of the paintings (i.e. *Horse Frightened by a Lion, Horse Devoured by a Lion*) are arranged so that the horse is the subject. Delacroix's *Lion Devouring a Horse*, exhibits a shift where the lion is embraced as the subject, as noted in the title of the lithograph.[17] This is subsequently reinforced in the content of the imagery, as only the lion subtlety engages the audience as the sole source of animation within the lithograph.

Delacroix's *Lion Devouring a Horse* shares subject matter with Stubbs's series, but focuses on a later moment in the encounter between the two animals. In Stubbs's *Horse Devoured by a Lion*, adjacent to the horse's strained neck is a glimpse of the lion's ferocious face sinking his teeth and tugging into the horse's flesh. This rendering of the horse's body legibly registers the painful sensation that the horse endures. As Sarafianos observes, this horse's pain is made explicit through the contortions of the body and neck,

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[17] Art Historian Nancy Finlay's dissertation "Animal Themes in the Paintings of Eugene Delacroix," addresses Delacroix's fascination with feline imagery. Finlay suggests since he predominately represented felines over any other animals strongly implies he valued felines for their iconographical significance (p. 7). Finlay examines an array of written sources—spanning from antiquity up to the nineteenth century—that address the iconographic significance of various felines. She also references literary sources, contemporary physiognomy, comparative anatomy and the artist's written testimony as evidence. She suggests that beyond their iconographic significance, Delacroix's depictions of feline combat relay his reflections of the "ceaseless strife between soul and body." (p. 10)

clenched mouth, and visible veins.[18] In Delacroix's work, conversely, the lion is sinking his teeth into the neck of a domesticated horse that is nearly dead. The blanket that shrouds the horse's body implies its domesticated status, stripping the sublime connotation as Burke indicates, "…in every social useful light the horse has nothing of the sublime."[19] To further accentuate the feebleness of the horse, Delacroix renders the animal with its mouth agape and tongue dangling to the side. While Stubbs's gives primacy to the sublime struggle between two wild beasts, Delacroix gives every indication the struggle is already over.

While Delacroix's *Lion Devouring a Horse* clearly relates to the precedent set by Stubbs in his 1763 horse and lion series, its focus on the aftermath of a sublime struggle connects more immediately to the work of his near contemporary, Théodore Géricault. Like Stubbs, Géricault was preoccupied with horse imagery throughout the entirety of his career. He became captivated early on in his childhood; he rode horses as a young boy and continued into his adult life.[20] Although animal imagery was traditionally considered "low" subject matter, Géricault was born into wealth and could afford to experiment with imagery of everyday life.[21] After his year-long project to complete his controversial painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819), Géricault was offered the opportunity to exhibit the work at the "Egyptian Hall" in London. During his stay, he was exposed to Stubbs's original works and also frequented the London zoo. It was a rare opportunity to observe

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[18] Sarafianos, "Stubbs, Walpole and Burke: Convulsive Imitation and 'Truth Extorted.'"

[19] Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into*, 108.

[20] Philippe Grunchec, comp., *Géricault's Horses: Drawings and Watercolours*, ed. Dan Wheeler (New York, NY: Vendome Press, 1984), 5.

[21] Lorenz Eitner, comp., *Géricault* (Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971), 13.

large felines from life, and in accordance to his exposure to the famous animalier Stubbs, his interest in lion and horse imagery resurged.

Even in the early years of Géricault's artistic endeavors, he indicated interest in the sublime encounter between the lion and horse. In 1810, he painted *Horse Attacked by a Lion*, (Oil on canvas, 54 x 65 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris), after Stubbs's *Horse Attacked by a Lion* (1769) (Oil on panel, approx. 24 x 28 cm. Tate Gallery, London). The adaptation suggests that Géricault relied on Stubbs's anatomical renderings and appreciated Stubbs's interpretation of such an encounter early on in his career. Although Géricault's painting exhibits a much cruder style, it is apparent that *Horse Attacked by a Lion* is a reworking of Stubbs's original piece. The conflict between predator and prey is the focal point in both depictions, stressed through various framing devices. While Stubbs relies on variants of light and shadow to compose the scene, Géricault frames the central action in a curvilinear fashion through the green and brown shrubbery in the overgrown landscape. The setting of each artwork is crucial, since both artists' renderings suggest wild and untamed landscapes untouched by humankind—a motif that Delacroix would both adopt and modify in his 1844 lithograph of *Lion Devouring a Horse*.

Shortly after Géricault's stay in England, he returned to lion and horse imagery in his 1823 lithograph, *Horse Devoured by a Lion* (Lithograph, 19.3 x 23.6 cm. Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill). Unlike his earlier painting *Horse Attacked by a Lion*, *Horse Devoured by a Lion* strays from some of the significant precedents set by Stubbs's *Lion and Horse* series. Notably, the scene lacks the dramatic encounter between a lion and his prey. Instead, Géricault depicts the moment after the struggle is won, where the lion busily chews into the dead horse's upper body. Géricault adheres to a broader pyramidal

grouping of the lion and horse that, although now pushed to the middle-ground, still dominates the circular composition. The surrounding landscape contains little detail, but there are cracks in the immediate foreground suggesting a dry landscape and a formidable rock-shelter in the background that frames the lion and horse. Géricault renders the scene with an acute sense of detail, particularly in the fur of the lion and brindle pattern on the horse. The lion's body contains darker cross-hatching that counters the lighter values rendered throughout the horse's body and the untouched foreground that encircles the predator and prey.

There are several crucial areas where Géricault deviates from standards set by Stubbs's *Lion and Horse* series, specifically in Géricault's conception of space, viewer relationship, and overall mood. In Stubbs's *Horse Devoured by a Lion*, there is a layering of the landscape to create a foreground, middle ground, and background. This creates the distance necessary for a viewer to engage in a sublime experience. Conversely, Géricault pulls the viewer in through a series of diagonals created by the horse's head, legs, and the lion's tail. This creates a sense of immediacy, as if the viewer is standing within the same space. Géricault's landscape is also far less specifically described than Stubbs's, so that viewers cannot link his image to a specific time or place. Both paintings describe an event occurring in nature, but Géricault's does so without the heightened exchange between the two forces. Stubbs's animals confront the onlooker, while Géricault's lion clings to the horse's body, hiding the wounds and preventing a visceral reaction. These elements in conjunction with Géricault's inclusion of a lifeless horse indicates his disregard for a sublime experience.

The subject matter and arrangement of composition in Delacroix's *Lion Devouring a Horse* suggests he drew heavily from Géricault's 1823 print *Horse Devoured by a Lion*. This is notable both in the tight grouping of the animals, and the descriptive elements of the surrounding landscape. Both artists leave little indication of a specific location, maintaining a level of ambiguity. Like Géricault, Delacroix goes to great lengths to maintain focus on the central action, the lion devouring a horse. For instance, Delacroix mimics Géricault's patches of light, encircling the animals in the immediate foreground. Both artists employ crosshatching to further emphasize the animal grouping. Delacroix follows suit of his predecessor by maintaining the darker façade of the cave, further framing the central action. Similar to Géricault, Delacroix selects the moment after the struggle has ceased. This horse's body lacks any visual signifiers of pain because the horse is nearly dead. Without the visualization of pain, the empathetic response necessary to rouse a sublime experience is unobtainable.

Borrowing certain elements from the horse and lion imagery of both Stubbs and Géricault, Delacroix's lithograph emerges as an amalgamation of sorts. Yet Delacroix's subtle changes in the placement of the animals make his image stand apart. As already noted, Stubbs's lion and horse series casts a safety net for onlookers, as the visceral interaction occurs between two wild animals in another time and place. In contrast, Géricault's lithograph *Horse Devoured by a Lion* takes a different direction and is absent of fear, violence, or drama. The lion's body horizontally sprawled across the composition echoes the surrounding wall—amplifying a barrier-like effect. The image is a simple and sterile documentation of predator and prey. Because Géricault fits both animals entirely into the picture plane, it emanates a feeling of completion. Delacroix take a different

approach. His lion gazes up from his meal, a simple shift in gesture that draws the viewer uncomfortably into the scene.

Through his dynamic composition, Delacroix focuses the viewer's attention on the vicious act of consumption. Drawing attention to this exchange underscores the victimization of the horse. This mighty steed was once someone's companion, but is now abandoned and left for dead. The framing devices employed within this work are minimal, but nonetheless effective. Unlike in paintings, emphasis in a lithograph leans heavily gradients of light and dark, which Delacroix achieves through cross-hatching. For example, the large, dark rock shelter behind the lion provides great contrast. Although the cave is left without much detail, it offers great contrast against the skillfully rendered body of the lion. Small crosshatch marks are places throughout the bodies of the animals, to render musculature and three-dimensionality. The foreground, and small view of the landscape in the background, also lack detail. The light rendering of these spaces provides evidence of possible grassy surroundings, but this is only a speculation. Delacroix manipulates these elements to further frame the lion and the horse. The horse's body is shrouded in what appears to be a blanket, a key element that will be addressed later in this analysis. The less defined fabric creates a significant border that highlights the horse's exposed upper body.

As previously mentioned, in Delacroix's *Lion Devouring a Horse*, the landscape is not rendered in great detail, nor is there any indication of a specific setting. However, there is one major detail that distinguishes his approach to this reoccurring theme. This detail is the blanket that is strewn across the horse's midsection. The presence of the blanket suggests this is not a struggle between two wild beasts, but in fact an encounter

between a domesticated horse and wild lion. The sublime struggle between two forces of nature has already passed, and as viewers, we are observing the aftermath. We are confronted with—and visually pulled into—this composition. Delacroix disregards the dramatic struggle between man and nature, or predator and prey. This indicates a shift away from the sublime approach that preoccupied his predecessors, and towards a direction of man's presence and relationship within nature. Delacroix's approach to *Lion Devouring a Horse* suggests he was reconsidering humankind's relationship to the natural world, a viewpoint that coincided with contemporaneous innovations in the field of comparative anatomy.

DELACROIX AND MODERN SCIENCE

Delacroix's engagement with animal themes in art was not limited to studying artistic precedents. The artist also showed a significant interest in the insights of modern scientific study. Like many artists of his era, Delacroix believed in the value of direct study from nature. Consider, for example, his *Écorché Torso of a Male Cadaver* (Black and red chalk, graphite, and white chalk on wove paper, Dimensions of sheet: 25.2 x 15.8 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City). The drawing is a study of a human cadaver executed in red chalk, with special attention given to the muscles of the upper body. Delacroix completed many studies of this kind, and his interests extended beyond the examination of human anatomy. On April 15, 1823 Delacroix wrote in his journal "… [I] must absolutely begin to draw horses. I must go to the stables every morning…"[22] In May of the same year, he wrote, "Yesterday, I went with [Charles-Henri Callande de] Champmartin to study the dead horses."[23] Although he does not elaborate much further, this statement suggests that the artist may have witnessed and recorded the dissection of dead horses.

Delacroix's interest in the anatomical study of humans and animals coincided with major findings in comparative anatomy, in particular, evidence to dispute Aristotle's foundational zoological concepts. The initial Aristotelian concept called into question

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[22] Eugene Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugene Delacroix*, trans. Walter Pach (New York, NY: Covici, Friede, 1937), 46.

[23] Ibid., 50.

was known as the Great Chain of Being, derived from his observations of the natural world. Based on his observations, Aristotle organized all organic elements on a hierarchical scale. All living things were separated by their level of complexity, with simplest at the base ascending to humans at the highest position.[24] Aristotle also maintained that all species are immutable, denying the potential of what would later be called evolution.[25] During the 19th century, however, two French naturalists employing comparative anatomy would shake the foundation of these long-held Aristotelian principles.

During the late-eighteenth century, the French National Museum of Natural History became the leading institution for the study of the natural sciences in all of Europe.[26] The zoologist Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) and the mineralogist Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772-1844) became pioneers of the institution, but diverged in their application of comparative anatomy and how to classify the animal kingdom. Cuvier's analysis of various species' internal structures led him to divide all species into four basic types: vertebrates, mollusks, articulates, and radiates.[27] His new taxonomic system was widely accepted, as it subsequently broadened each grouping to include simple and complex species into the same category—thus invalidated the Great Chain of Being. However, due to his Protestant beliefs, Cuvier upheld Aristotle's fixity of the species, despite the emergence of evidence proving otherwise. According to science historian Edward J. Larson, "Integrating the Genesis account with mainstream

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[24] Edward J. Larson, *Evolution: The Remarkable History of a Scientific Theory* (New York, NY: Modern Library, 2004), 7.

[25] Ibid., 13.

[26] Hervé Le Guyader, *Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire: A Visionary Naturalist*, trans. Marjorie Grene, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2004), 1.

[27] Larson, *Evolution: The Remarkable History*, 6.

Aristotelian science, premodern Christian naturalists viewed species… [as] fixed for all time in a perfect (albeit fallen) creation."[28] Cuvier rationalized his resistance by insisting that the internal structure and anatomical organs of any living species, "…served its functional needs," and were unadaptable, as to not conflict with the Christian belief in special creation.[29]

In contrast, Saint-Hilaire endeavored to prove all living species were structurally unified, based on his concept the "unity of composition," stating anatomical structure could be simplified to one basic module or unit.[30] Saint-Hilaire only found similarities between vertebrates by comparing a noncomplex species to an embryonic stage of a complex mammal. As historian Pietro Corsi elucidates: "…for example, adult fish resembled a particular stage of fetal development in mammals. Accordingly, some parts of fish, bird and reptile skulls could usefully be compared to analogous parts in mammal fetuses."[31] Such conclusions threatened Aristotle's fixity of species and Christian special creation, as Saint-Hilaire's findings imply a mutation of a single component across various species. The threat his theory of unity of composition posed did not go unnoticed by his colleague and friend, Cuvier.

In 1830, the two leading researchers held several public debates over their theoretical discrepancies at the Academy of Sciences, introducing their conclusions to a broader audience for the first time. Their debate gained widespread attention from the public, primarily because a variety of publications—including journals and newspapers—

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[28] Ibid., 13.
[29] Ibid., 8.
[30] Guyader, *Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire: A Visionary*, 8-9.
[31] Pietro Corsi, *The Age of Lamarck: Evolutionary Theories in France, 1790-1830*, trans. Jonathan Mandelbaum (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 233.

announced the impending debates and recounted the arguments as they occurred. According to historian Toby A. Appel, the extensive coverage propelled the content of the debates beyond their scientific implications into sociopolitical realms.[32] Primarily because Cuvier maintained a strong hold over the French natural sciences, he was considered a stubborn traditionalist unwilling to budge on theories that conflicted his own research. Saint-Hiliare's rebuttals challenged Cuvier's constrictive grip, and he became known as "the leader of a progressive and synthetic school of natural history."[33] German literary figure Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was passionate about the debate, and wrote two articles in response. He favored Saint-Hilaire, viewing the debates as offering freedom from the backwards thinking of Cuvier.[34] The series of debates during 1830 brought to light a brooding rivalry between conservative and progressive leaders of the natural sciences. But more importantly, it was the laymen's exposure to the dynamic theories of Saint-Hilaire—calling into question traditional beliefs like special creation, and garnering attention around the interrelation of vast types of invertebrates that impact their view of the natural world.

Delacroix may or may not have attended the public debates of Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier, but letters and journal entries indicate that he was acquainted with the naturalists at the National Museum of Natural History, likely having general familiarity with Cuvier's critical research on vertebrates.[35] In October of 1824, he wrote to the French

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[32] Toby A. Appel, *The Cuvier-Geoffrey Debate: French Biology in the Decades before Darwin* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987), 155.

[33] Ibid., 155.

[34] Ibid., 156.

[35] In 1800–05, Cuvier published his *Leçons d'anatomie comparée* ("Lessons on Comparative Anatomy") which addressed his methodology known as the principle of

writer Stendhal to meet at the museum at half-past eight to attend a party thrown by Cuvier.[36] Later, in 1828, he was invited to the National Museum of Natural History for the rare opportunity to sketch a flayed lion. On October 16th of that year, he wrote to contemporaneous animal sculptor, Antoine Barye,"The Lion is dead. Run, run. This weather should spur us on. I'll expect you there."[37] Delacroix's sketch *Lion Ecorché* (1829) (Graphite on paper. Musée du Louvre, Paris) shows two studies of the crouched lion from slightly different angles, both highlighting the beast's skull and upper body. Delacroix could now render the lion with an accuracy that his predecessors were not privy to during their lifetime.

The influence this experience had on Delacroix's feline imagery is demonstrated in *Lion Devouring a Horse*. In the lithograph, the lion's body, although positioned at a different angle and slight incline, is reminiscent of the curled position of the flayed lion. The manner in which the flayed lion's visible rear leg is tucked alongside its body, with its tail curled forward, is also comparable to the lion in the lithograph. Moreover, Delacroix transposes the arrangement of the lion's forelegs in the sketch into the lithograph, with the far foreleg extended outwards, and the near foreleg pulled closer to the body.

Delacroix also showed interest in observing live animals in the process of feeding. In a letter addressed to Saint-Hilaire from August 22, 1841, he wrote,

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correlations. In 1817, he also published *Le Règne animal distribué d'après son organisation* ("The Animal Kingdom, Distributed According to Its Organization"), which described his organization of the animal kingdom into four categories: vertebrates, mollusks, articulates, and radiates.

[36] Eugène Delacroix, *Eugène Delacroix: Selected Letters 1813-186*, comp. André Joubin, trans. Jean Stewart (London, UK: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1971), 117.

[37] Ibid., 151.

> I am very anxious to obtain permission to make studies of the animals in the menagerie of the Royal Garden, and for this purpose to be allowed inside the building where they are kept, at their feeding time. I should be most grateful if you would grant me this favour as soon as possible.[38]

The letter suggests that the artist was interested in observing a natural process between predator and prey, to accurately construe an interaction at the center of much of his feline imagery, including *Lion Devouring a Horse*.

Lion Devouring a Horse may be seen to subtly reference Saint-Hiliare's view on the interrelationship among vertebrates, discussed during the great 1830 debates. This is discernable by the coupling of the animals in Delacroix's lithograph, which stands apart from those portrayed by Stubbs and Géricault. There is a sense of cohesion between the two mammals, due to the consistent application of the quick, shortened dashes across their bodies, and a similar treatment of the manes. Where the lion's paws end and the horse's midsection begin are difficult to ascertain. Delacroix's unusual cropping of the image further stresses this issue, as the horse's body is abruptly cut off at the midsection—a cropping unlike the images by the examined predecessors. The lion's crouched position appears possessive—over his meal of course—yet could this stance also be read as an embrace? It is interesting to note there are not any signs of injury, no lesions or tears along the horse's midsection or neck. The lion's tail curls towards the horse, while the horse's legs are pulled tight to its body and point back at the lion. This visual pull back and forth between the two is infinite, amplifying the ambiguities latent in the circumstances of their encounter.

These various elements suggest Delacroix was aware of man's close relationship

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[38] Ibid., 234.

to the surrounding natural world, or at least to other vertebrates. According to his journal, on January 19, 1847, Delacroix returned to the museum to view their natural history collection.[39] He described his path through the exhibits, starting with crustaceans, continuing through to the exhibition of the various reptiles, and concluding his tour at the display of the large felines. Notably, the arrangement of exhibits at the museum appears to model Cuvier's four embranchments of the animal kingdom.[40] Delacroix then made an intriguing point when he shifted to the display of vertebrate animals, writing: "Then the animals *which are nearer in their nature to our own* (italics mine): the innumerable deer, gazelles, elks, bucks, goats, sheep…"[41] Delacroix indicates here his understanding not only of anatomy, but also of the realignment of animal kingdom that asserts the structural affinities between humankind and the remaining vertebrates.

The prior analysis of Delacroix's execution of anatomical drawings and examination of comparative anatomy was informed by art historian Eve Twose Kliman's dissertation, "Eugene Delacroix: A Study of Selected Painting, Watercolours, Pastels, Prints and Drawings of the Feline." By examining centuries of artistic precedents, alongside an in-depth exploration of Delacroix's feline imagery, and the recent innovations in comparative anatomy, she brought forth a convincing argument. She proposed Delacroix accepted Saint-Hilaire's unity of composition as a way to interpret the organization of the natural world as early as the 1830s. Citing Delacroix's feline imagery from the early 1840s and lion hunt paintings from the 1850s, Kliman argued Delacroix went beyond relaying the structural affinities between vertebrate animals, but

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[39] Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugene*, 130.
[40] Appel, The Cuvier-Geoffrey Debate: French, 36.
[41] Ibid., 130.

in fact relayed their resemblance to humankind.[42] However, her argument rests heavily upon a quote Hippolyte Taine attributed to Delacroix in 1863, claiming he was aware of the structural affinities between the human's forearm and the lion's foreleg.[43]

While the argument set forth in this section acknowledges the connection between Delacroix's feline imagery and Saint-Hilaire's contribution to comparative anatomy, I argue *Lion Devouring a Horse* indicates his emphasis on the structural affinities strictly between the lion and horse. This thesis adopts a less direct connection between Delacroix's supposed mindset in 1863, to when he produced the lithograph in 1844. Since mankind is not represented within the lithograph, it is more apt to consider the relation between the lion and horse, and unpack these implications. However, this analysis would not have been possible without the evidence presented within Kliman's dissertation. My hope is that the evidence provided will strengthen the relationship between Delacroix's feline depictions and the findings of comparative anatomy.

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[42] Eve Twose Kliman, "Eugene Delacroix: A Study of Selected Painting, Watercolours, Pastels, Prints and Drawings of the Feline" (PhD diss., University of Toronto (Canada), 1978), 197, accessed December 19, 2014, http://search.proquest.com/docview/302897361?accountid=14677.

[43] Ibid., 175.

MEDIUM AND MEANING

However aware Delacroix was of contemporary anatomical study and its implications for an understanding of humankind's place in the natural world, *Lion Devouring a Horse* is no scientific illustration. Neither is it an epic history painting. Instead, it is an experimental image executed in a newly popular medium—lithography. Looking to the characteristics of lithography and its status in 19th century France sheds some light on Delacroix's use of the medium in *Lion Devouring a Horse.*

Lithography was introduced to France at the turn of the nineteenth century, and its potential more fully realized when Charles de Lasteyrie and Godefrey Engelmann established their printing presses in 1816.[44] The years between 1820 and 1830 saw a sharp increase in lithographic production in France. At this time, French dramatist Baron Taylor commenced a significant long-term project showcasing the power of the medium, *Les voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France*.[45] Though distant in subject matter from Delacroix's *Lion Devouring a Horse, Les voyages pittoresques* may be seen as a model for the type of immediate and intimate image-making Delacroix was to employ in his lithographic practice.

The first three volumes of *Les voyages pittoresques* were dedicated to describing the historical monuments of Ancient Normandy. The printed images featured the interior

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[44] Weber, *A History of Lithography*, 52.
[45] Ibid., 55.

and exterior of historic churches, highlighting the Medieval, Romanesque, and Gothic architectural elements that were then attracting new appreciation. Such an expansive project romanticized Normandy's past which stimulated intrigue for French society, and this fascination with the province lasted well into the 1830s.

In *Distinguished Images: Prints and the Visual Economy in Nineteenth-Century France* (2013), Stephen Bann examines the scope and impact of *Les voyages pittoresques* on the French art world.[46] The first three volumes of the *Voyages pittoresques* celebrated Normandy's architecture, and, according to Bann, preserved the past for the modern viewer.[47] Because lithographic prints use relatively inexpensive materials and exist in smaller sizes when compared to painting, they offer viewers a more readily accessible and intimate form of engagement with images. Detailed depictions of interior and exterior scenes of Normandy churches provided a sense of immediacy to the Parisian audience, who could not yet travel with ease to the province. Bann also notes the atmospheric quality that the medium captures— artists can bathe their illustrations in light by incorporating the white base of the paper into their images.[48] Taylor organized a

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[46] Stephen Bann, *Distinguished Images: Prints in the Visual Economy of Nineteenth-Century France* (London, UK: Yale University Press, 2013). According to Bann, Taylor's vision for the *Voyages pittoresques* was determined by several factors. In reaction to the "centralizing tendencies of the Revolution," Emperor Napoleon voiced increasing support to initiate the foundation of museums in several regional capitols, including Rouen (p. 47). Also, after the fall of the Empire and several conflicts with Britain, northern France was occupied by French troops. This brought an awareness to Normandy during the eleventh-century when the province expanded their rule over England (pp. 47-48). According to Bann, the French saw Normandy as synonymous with the early Middle Ages when its borders were unstable, and ultimately as a paradigm for France in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. The fact that Normandy also preserved a stockpile of medieval antiquities was another element that surpassed Normandy's paradigmatic status (p. 48).

[47] Ibid., 49. The *Voyages pittoresques* also protected the sanctity of the remnants of ecclesiastical rituals by frequently incorporating images of the clergy.

[48] Ibid., 56.

project that not only stirred interest in historic architecture and nationalistic pride, but simultaneously showcased modern subjects. This last feature of the *Voyages Pittoresques* encouraged the French Romantics, including Delacroix, to embrace lithography when portraying modern subjects.

Published in the *Voyages Pittoresques*, Eugene Cicéri's lithograph *Ruins of the Priory of Beaumont le Roger* (c.1820-1878) (Lithograph. The Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris) is one of many images describing Normandy's historic architecture, featuring the ruins of the Holy Trinity priory. Cicéri's image captures many of the iconic qualities of the series. The details of the ruins are rendered with exquisite accuracy, and the work features a vast range of gradients of light between dark. Cicéri utilizes the white ground of the paper to represent sunlight pouring in through the windows. The image is inviting, as the pathway into the tunnel extends outwards to the edge of the frame. The repetition of the rounded arches pulls the viewer into the tunnel, inciting curiosity into what lies ahead. Cicéri's figures not only enhance an anecdotal intrigue, but also aid the viewer in deciphering the scale of the tunnels. Though depicting vastly different subject matter, *Lion Devouring a Horse* shares several formal and thematic features with images such as *Ruins of the Priory of Beaumont le Roger*. Just as the images of the *Voyages Pittoresques* bring Normandy to those unable to visit, so too does Delacroix's lithograph bring a foreign feline to a French audience. Much like Cicéri's image welcomes the viewer to study the features of the monastery, Delacroix asks the viewer to explore the ambiguities of the unusual scene. This comparison underscores what drastic range lithography can obtain, from a tightly controlled hyper-realistic representation, to a fluid,

loosely rendered scene straddling somewhere between fiction and reality.

Adopting lithography as a platform as early as 1814, Delacroix explored various subjects that allowed for a loose interpretation, such as translating literary texts into humorous images, playful caricature, or animal combat.[49] These subjects express Delacroix's artistic freedom, as the themes are not entirely derived from nature or indicative of an actual event. This imaginative element to his works coincides with the nature of lithographic prints, their opportunity for replication, small size, and accessibility. Paintings are often hung on a wall, or displayed on an easel. Whether in a public setting, such as a salon, or a private gathering in the home, paintings are kept at a distance on display. This is in part to avert damaging of the work, but also due to the status of painting in the hierarchy of media during the nineteenth century.

Exploring the relationship between Delacroix's 1844 watercolor rendition of *Lion Devouring a Horse* (Watercolor, bodycolor and gum Arabic with graphite on paper, mounted to board, 20 x 27.3cm. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston) to that of the lithographic version demonstrates how the artist manipulates content for disparate mediums.[50] In the painting, the overall layout of the composition mirrors that found in the lithograph. The horse's midsection is cropped at the same point, but its body blurs into the background. Yet the noteworthy distinction in the painted rendition is what the image does not depict—this sad horse is not draped in a blanket. Without this key element, the painting more closely resembles Géricault's *Horse Frightened by a Lion* after Stubbs, as

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[49] Loys Delteil, ed., *Delacroix: The Graphic Work a Catalogue Raisonne*, trans. Susan Stauber (San Francisco, CA: Alan Wofsy Fine Arts, 1997), xv.

[50] In *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue*, vol. III, Lee Johnson cites that there is an additional oil painting of *Lion Devouring a Horse*, currently at the Gezira Museum in Cairo (pg. 11.) The composition does not vary in a great degree from the watercolor rendition.

it features two wild beasts in a lush landscape. However, the landscape is less defined, marked by a muddled color palette of greens and browns. The details of the lithograph *Lion Devouring a Horse* become more pronounced in contrast to the painting. Although the lithographic crayon provides a soft touch and looser, sketch-like quality, the free-flowing medium does not lack a sense of accuracy or descriptiveness. For example, there are a dazzling variety of highlights, shadows, and small markings that decorate the animals' bodies, accentuating their anatomical contours. Another advantage in employing lithography is the range in gradation that is attainable. For instance, Delacroix embraces the whiteness of the paper to exaggerate the highlights, like the white areas that encircle the lion's black pupils. The whiteness of the lion's eyes enhance his intimidation, outweighing the presence of the lion in the watercolor version.

The context in which *Lion Devouring a Horse* circulated is important, given the noted modifications from the translation of painting to print. Printed in the bottom right corner of the lithograph are the words "Imp. Bertauts," indicating this lithograph was printed by printer/publisher Victor Bertauts, as part of the series titled *Les Artistes Contemporains*.[51] The series featured lithographs by various artists covering a wide array of content—including landscapes, portraiture, animal scenes, etc. *Les Artistes Contemporains* were published by Goupil, Vibert et Cie from 1843-1853.[52] The printed reminder in the bottom left corner of the lithograph reads "Eug Delacroix pinx et. lith"

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[51] British Museum Collection Database, "1889,0608.361," British Museum, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1396663&partId=1&searchText=Les+artistes+contemporains&page=1.

[52] British Museum Collection Database, "1889,0608.477," British Museum, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3013637&partId=1&searchText=1889%2c0608.477&page=1.

specifying this lithograph made was after the painted versions of *Lion Devouring a Horse*. But the opportunity for publication permitted wider dissemination. This aspect may have encouraged Delacroix to enhance the imaginative aspects for the audience—by outlining the landscape with hard linear edges, yet maintaining a non-descript setting, heightening the tension between highlights and shadows, and finally the draping the horse in a blanket. These characteristics amplify the curiosity of the image, forsaking an obvious narrative in favor of unfettered interpretation.

Lithography was especially appealing to Romantic artists such as Delacroix because the softness of the lithographic crayon was comparable to drawing with ink or chalk on paper, unlike the hard linear edges of woodblock printing or engraving. Each of these features suggests that in *Lion Devouring a Horse*, the medium of lithography provided Delacroix with great freedom for experimentation and creativity.

CONCLUSION

Though executed a decade before his epic *Lion Hunt* of 1855, *Lion Devouring a Horse* is perhaps best understood less as a precursor to that heroic painting than as an experimental visualization of its aftermath. It would seem that humans are winning the battle in *Lion Hunt*, yet in his personal writings, Delacroix seldom expressed faith in human progress or triumph. His vision of the modern world instead seemed to bear some affinities to the image seen in *Lion Devouring a Horse*, where nature reclaims its own.

Several journal entries during the 1850s speak to Delacroix's disapproval of the abandonment of traditional labor in favor of modern machinery. In an entry dated May 20, 1853, the artist criticized French publicist Emile de Girardin (1802-1881) for his positive response to the widespread adaptation of machinery, which was gradually displacing the rural working class. He distressed over slowly vanishing French landscape, writing, "Will steam stop before churches and cemeteries? And will the Frenchmen, returning to their fatherland after some years, be reduced to asking where their village stood, and where the grave of his father's was?"[53] Several years later, Delacroix returned to a similar subject, recording his thoughts after his experience at the agricultural exposition in France. In his entry dated June 6th, 1856, he admitted,

> …people stand in admiration before these beautiful works of the imagination: machines for exploiting the earth, animals from all countries brought for a fraternal competition of all peoples: there is not one little bourgeois who… is not infinitely grateful to himself for having been born in such a precious century. For

[53] Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugene*, 310.

> my own part, I felt the greatest sadness amidst the bizarre mixture of things: those poor animals can't make out what that stupid crowd wants of them…[54]

Delacroix went against the grain by rejecting the agricultural advancements that his homeland had adopted. His sympathy for animals is also notable in this excerpt. In the same entry, he later lamented: "The plough…will now be no more than an instrument fallen to contempt! The horse has had his day, as well…"[55]

In light of Delacroix's journal entries, in conjunction with the prior evidence examined, it is possible that *Lion Devouring a Horse* reflects a truth for the artist. Rather than the elaborate and triumphant action featured in *Lion Hunt*, Delacroix instead renders *Lion Devouring a Horse* in stark contrast, with a directness that is difficult to overlook. Delacroix selects lithography to execute this unique study, to impart the work with qualities like immediacy, modernity, and nostalgia, akin to the effect of the images featured in *Les Voyages Pittoresques*. With *Lion Devouring a Horse*, Delacroix employed a modern medium to explore modern theory, one that displaced the Great Chain of Being for a natural system organized solely by structural similarities, bridging the gap between a wide array of species.

Delacroix's watercolor rendition of *Lion Devouring a Horse* is hardly distinct from the ongoing tradition of lion and horse imagery. The painting follows a common trajectory—two wild animals, predator and prey, connect in their native environment. The images leaves little to be fantasized. Yet the lithograph *Lion Devouring a Horse* reimagines the encounter into a narrative with endless possibilities. Delacroix jumped at the chance to modify the lithographic version, now presented to a larger audience under

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[54] Ibid., 511.
[55] Ibid., 512.

the chance to modify the lithographic version, now presented to a larger audience under unique circumstances. Although the end is visualized, it leaves one unsure of how it all began. He imbues the image with a blend of realism and imagination—employing a naturalistic rendering of the animals, the landscape—but altering the circumstances forcing the viewer to consider the peculiarities of the image, like the abandoned horse shrouded in the blanket, or the nondescript scene. The image provokes an onslaught of inquiries, yet it hardly brings one nearer to the answers. However, that may have been the artist's intention all along.

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